

Reflection Questions: Isaiah 58:1-12

For the message, "What Does God Require of Us?" given by Pastor John Ferguson at Mercy Hill Church in Bryan/College Station, Texas, on October 13, 2019

These reflection questions are designed to help you apply the message from the Scriptures by helping you think through application to your personal life, your church life, and your city's life. You can use these by yourself for reflection, or with your family or small group for discussion. To review the message, go to MercyHillBCS.org/resources/messages.

INTRODUCTION

Pray. Take a moment to pray asking God to guide you in reflecting upon the Scripture text.

Read the Scripture text: Isaiah 58:1-12

1 "Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
2 Yet they seek me daily
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they delight to draw near to God.
3 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no
knowledge of it?'

Behold, in the day
of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.
4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.
5 Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the Lord?

6 "Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
11 And the Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.
12 And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many
generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

QUESTIONS

1. Let's think about how this text applies to our lives as individuals.

- As you observe what is being said in verses 2-4, what do you learn about the people that Isaiah was speaking to? How would you summarize their thinking and actions? Where is the disconnect?

- In verses 6-7, God speaks through Isaiah describing the kind of “fast” or we might say *spiritual practices*” that God is after for his people. How would you summarize in your own words what he is saying?
 - Is this what you were expecting? Why or why not?
 - Why would God be concerned about their social behavior—the way they pursue justice and love mercy?
- How does this text clarify what God wants to do in my life, what he is concerned to be present in my life? How does this challenge the way I normally think about what it means to follow Jesus?

2. Let’s think about how this text applies to us as a community of Jesus’ followers.

- As you look at verses 8-12, what kind of lifestyle / character is this passage inviting our community of faith to embody? In other words, what would a church community captured by a desire to see justice for the oppressed and mercy for the poor in our city look like?
- Dialing in on verse 12, how does this text clarify the kind of lifestyle we are called to live in this world, both in terms of intentionality and motive?

3. Let’s think about how this text applies to our city.

- How would Bryan/College Station look radically different if everybody did what God describes in this passage?
- How does this passage serve as an invitation for us to join God’s mission?